



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Kevin S. Parker

Statement On The Shooting Death Of Saheed Vassell

KEVIN S. PARKER April 6, 2018

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The shooting death of 34-year-old Saheed Vassell in Crown Heights once again signals the urgent necessity of the creation of Crisis Intervention Teams (CIT)—a call I have been making since 2014 when I introduced legislation to that effect in the New York State Senate. The Crisis Intervention Team Act, Senate Bill 6365, is a measure intended to save lives and bridge the chasm between those in emotional crisis and law enforcement.

Vassell, an emotionally disturbed person (EDP) who from all accounts was well-known by both community members and police officers in the area, was gun down because the police responded in a manner consistent with their training -- which is as a threat to public safety. With the existence of Crisis Intervention Teams, specially trained NYPD officers would be dispatched enabling them to respond to EDPs calls in a manner that increases the safety of the 'emotionally disturbed' citizen, the police officer and bystanders thereby creating better outcomes for all. In addition, to the specialized training, with the creation of CITs, police officers will have access to mental health professionals who have the tools necessary to defuse situations involving this population segment.

I extend my condolences to Saheed's father, Eric Vassell and the entire Vassell family on this tragic loss of their loved one. My heart goes out to them in their period of grief.

CIT is a vital piece of legislation if we are to circumvent an escalation of reported incidents of people like Saheed Vassell, Deborah Danner and Dwayne Jeune – emotionally disturbed persons who lost their lives at the hands of police gunfire.

I am urging my colleagues in government to support the CIT legislation so that we can create a safer environment for our citizens and police officers alike when dealing with emotionally disturbed individuals.